DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 291 666 SO 018 889

AUTHOR Nugent, Helen Jean M.
TITLE Teaching about Canada: ERIC Digest No. 44.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, Bloomington, IN.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Dec 87
CONTRACT 400-86-0020
NOTE 4p.
AVAILABLE FROM Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 2805 East Tenth Street, Suite 120, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Area Studies; *Curriculum Development; Curriculum Enrichment; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Social Studies; *Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Canada; ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

This ERIC Digest considers: (1) why U.S. students should learn about Canada; (2) where course content on Canada belongs in the curriculum; and (3) useful strategies and resources to improve the teaching of Canadian studies. The United States and Canada share the world's largest undefended border, and the United States trades more with Canada than with any other country. In 1984, the United States accounted for 71.5 percent of Canadian imports. During the 19th and 20th centuries, Canada and the United States have been military and diplomatic partners in supporting stable and free governments throughout the world. Both Canada and the United States have cultural links to Western Europe and the British Isles and both countries have a common commitment to the core values of democracy. Teaching about Canada can be incorporated into existing social studies courses at all levels. University level courses should include sufficient Canadian content to provide future teachers with adequate knowledge to teach about Canada. Separate interdisciplinary Canadian studies courses could include Canadian literature, art, and culture. Strategies for teaching about Canada include: (1) emphasizing comparative analysis; (2) requiring students to examine issues from the Canadian perspective; and (3) using a variety of resources. A list of references and ERIC resources are provided. (SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED291666

TEACHING ABOUT CANADA

ERIC DIGEST NO. 44

by

Helen Jean M. Nugent

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Social
Studies/Social Science Education
2805 East Tenth Street, Suite 120
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana 47405

SO018889

ERIC®

Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education
2805 East Tenth Street, Suite 120
Indiana University
Bloomington, Indiana 47405 (812) 335-3838

ERIC DIGEST No. 44 December 1987

TEACHING ABOUT CANADA

by Helen Jean M. Nugent

The United States and Canada share the world's longest undefended border. The United States also trades more with Canada (exports and imports) than with any other country. Yet, the American public is largely uninformed about Canada, Canadians, and their unique culture. This ERIC Digest considers (1) why United States students should study about Canada, (2) where content on Canada belongs in the curriculum, and (3) useful strategies and resources to improve the teaching of Canadian Studies.

Why Study Canada? The United States annually trades twice as much with Canada as with Japan, and as much with Canada as with all the European Economic Community nations combined! For example, in 1984, the United States accounted for 75.6 percent ($82,796 million) of Canadian exports. During that same year, the United States was responsible for 71.5 percent of Canadian imports.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Canada and the United States have been military and diplomatic partners in maintaining stable and free governments. Canada, like the United States, is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Canadian troops are currently members of the United Nations peace keeping force stationed in the Golan Heights (the disputed borderland between Israel and Syria).

Canada's large area and valuable resources make it a very significant country. Canada includes 3,851,809 square miles and ranks second in land area among the countries of the world; only the U.S.S.R. is larger. However, Canada's small population of only twenty-six million (ten percent of the United States) influences some outsiders to underestimate the importance and potential of the Canadian nation.

Canada and the United States have much in common. Both countries have cultural links to Western Europe and the British Isles. Canada and the United States also have a common commitment to the core values of democracy.

Although similarities between the two nations are very evident, and most easily stressed, the differences are equally evident. Culturally, Americans must be willing to recognize the development of a unique, but fragile, Canadian identity that is distinct from that of the United States. Canada has chosen to stress a bilingual founding (English and French) and multicultural existence based on a constitutional dedication to "Peace, Order, and Good Government." Maintaining this existence has not been easy. National unity has been threatened at several points and remains a source of concern. French-English tensions, economic imbalances among the regions, East-West differences, and federal-provincial power struggles all pose serious questions to which Canadians must find a satisfactory compromise. Informed Americans can play a helpful role by eliminating the unintentional but persistent threat of American domination that would destroy Canada's existence.

Through learning about the evolution of Canadian independence, the encouragement of a social mosaic cultural pattern, the importance of regionalism, and the design of the parliamentary balance of federal-provincial power, Americans may know and appreciate the character of Canada.

Where Does Canada Belong in the Curriculum? Teaching about Canada is appropriate at every level of the curriculum and can easily be integrated into any subject. Classroom content about Canada is largely hit-and-miss across the United States. In most states, a priority needs to be put on establishing university-level courses which include sufficient Canadian content to provide future teachers with adequate knowledge to deal with Canada in their own classrooms.

New York, under the leadership of the State University of New York at Plattsburgh, has developed a curriculum which mandates a unit on Canada in elementary and middle school and includes additional high school options. North Carolina, Washington, Maine, and Michigan have also made efforts to encourage the teaching of Canadian topics in elementary schools. SUNY-Plattsburgh, West Washington University, and Duke University have developed text materials appropriate to the curriculum in those states. Michigan State University and the University of Maine at Orono have published resource guides for teachers in those states.

Learning about Canada can easily begin prior to any formal education. The "next door" location offers an opportunity to visit a foreign nation. Pre-school children can easily recognize the flag and national anthem as different from their own. In the primary grades, *truly* North American holidays can be noted: Christian, Jewish, and Islamic communities celebrate in both nations; national independence days are observed on July 1 in Canada, July 4 in the United States; Thanksgiving, of English origins, is celebrated in mid-October in Canada, late November in the United States; both nations commemorate November 11(as Remembrance Day in Canada and as Veteran's Day in the United States); Labour Day is celebrated the same although spelled differently.

In upper elementary or middle school years, the geographical regions of Canada can be compared with those of the United States; Atlantic Canada to New England; Central Canada to Mid-Atlantic/Old Northwest; Prairie Canada to midwestern wheat belt; Cordillera to Northwest/Alaska. Folksongs and folklore of each region can be compared to form a background for later examination of cultural differences and similarities.

Canada's evolution to independence presents an interesting contrast to the American revolutionary beginnings, which may be examined in standard United States history courses. The high school history student can examine the French colonization period and notice that French culture is more evident in Canada because of the French heritage of Quebec. Canadian roles in the War of 1812 and in the American Civil War have interesting ramifications

Helen Jean M. Nugent is Director of the Centre for Canadian Studies Development, Franklin College, Franklin, Indiana.

in both countries. Canadian participation in World War I and World War II also offers useful comparisons to United States history students.

Government classes may benefit greatly from comparison of the political institutions of the two countries—the similarities and differences of presidential and parliamentary systems. The electoral process, systems of federalism, and constitutional development in both countries should also be valuable objects of comparison.

In world history courses, emphasis upon Canada's assumption of a leading role in the British Commonwealth and *La Francophonie* is an effective way to illustrate the transition of former colonial possessions into independent nations. The political positions of Canada also more often reflect "third world" interests than do those of the United States.

Sociology and economics courses can use a Canadian unit to illustrate the struggle of "small" nations faced with impending domination by larger neighbors. The retention of ethnic diversities in the "social mosaic" as opposed to the "melting pot" is a valuable sociological concept, and the reality of "economic imperialism" is also easily displayed.

Aside from incorporating Canada into existing courses, separate interdisciplinary Canadian Studies courses could include non-social studies elements of Canadian literature (both Anglophone and Francophone), French-Canadian culture (Quebecois and Acadian), Native culture (Indian, Inuit, and Metis), fine arts (music, painting, architecture, drama), science (ecology and environment, especially of the North), technology (transportation and communication, mining, oil sands exploitation), mathematics (metric measure, computer program development). Such courses could build upon and emphasize concepts of geography, history, government, economics, and sociology. The feasibility of a capstone field trip to experience the unique quality of Canadian life is a great advantage to a study of Canada.

What are Useful Strategies for Teaching about Canada? *Emphasize comparative analysis.* Caution is necessary, however, to avoid creating the impression that either "our way" or "their way" is superior. The underlying fact is that Canada has an image of being a less significant nation only because her development has been adjacent to that of the United States. On any other continent in the world, Canada would be a prime example of a stable nation with an efficient economy and freely elected government, which has contributed throughout her history to the establishment and protection of free and independent societies at home and abroad. Only "next door" to the superpower image of the United States do Canadian accomplishments seem less significant.

Require students to examine issues from the Canadian perspective. This will develop a better understanding of Canadian-American relations and the diplomatic difficulties which occasionally result from opinions created by different national experiences. By understanding international relations between two nations that are seemingly so similar, the complexities between obviously dissimilar nations become more evident.

Use a variety of resources. There are many excellent resources available to help teachers integrate Canadian studies into the classroom. Consulates throughout the country respond readily to requests addressed to the Public Affairs Officer. The government of Quebec also maintains offices in major cities in the United States for those interested in that province.

Canadians studying or working in the United States are numerous. They are usually pleased to visit the classroom with a personal viewpoint on Canadian life.

Many excellent films are also available about Canada and can be found in the *Film Canada* catalogue. It is available upon request from the Center for the Study of Canada, SUNY-Plattsburgh, Plattsburgh, NY 12901.

The teacher can serve as a prime resource. Teachers should be aware of the Canadian perspective on the world and world events. The lack of Canadian topics in the American media causes difficulty. However, visits to Canada can be very rewarding, especially if contact with Canadian sources is a prime objective. Avoid major "chain" motels, campgrounds, and restaurants. Patronize local establishments or, better still, travel "bed and breakfast" as Canadians themselves often do. Visit Canadian museums, libraries, and places of achievement. Read Canadian newspapers and magazines also available by subscription in the United States. Watch Canadian television programs not the American reruns.

These teaching suggestions, coupled with renewed emphasis on teaching about Canada in United States classrooms, will enable students to realize the importance of Canada in the world today.

References and ERIC Resources

Following is a list of resources, including references used to prepare the Digest. Those items followed by an ED number are in the ERIC system and are available in microfiche and/or paper copies from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). For information about prices, write EDRS, 3900 Wheeler Avenue, Alexandria, Virginia 22304. Entries followed by an EJ number are annotated monthly in CIJE (*Current Index to Journals in Education*) which is available in libraries containing ERIC collections. EJ documents are not available through EDRS; however, they can be located in the journal section of most libraries using the bibliographic information provided below.

Alper, Donald, Robert Monahan, and Donald Wilson. STUDY CANADA: OVERVIEW. Western Washington University, 1983.

Bennett, Paul W. and Cornelius J. Jaenen. "Visions of Primitives: Early French Views of Amerindians." HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHER 22 (1986) 47-49. EJ 348 172.

Blankenship, Glen and others. THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA: A COMMON HERITAGE, A SHARED FUTURE. Georgia, 1986. ED 272 423.

CANADA HANDBOOK. Ottawa, Canada: Minister of Supply and Services, 1986.

Freeman, Stanley L. Jr. CONSIDER CANADA: A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS. University of Maine, 1983.

HOOSIER CONNECTIONS: UNDERSTANDING CANADA. Franklin College, 1987.

McGaughey, Robert. "Strategies for Canadian American Relations." HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHER 23:1 (Fall 1987): 35-38. EJ number to be assigned.

Moore, Christopher. "Cultural and Other Sovereignties: Canadian-American Relations at the Crunch." HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHER 23:1 (Fall 1987): 5-6. EJ number to be assigned.

Neidardt, W.S. "Canadian-American Relations: A Relationship in Transition." HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHER 23:1 (Fall 1987): 7-19.

Whyte, Kenneth J. "Strategies for Teaching Indian and Metis Students," CANADIAN JOURNAL OF NATURE EDUCATION 13:3 (1986) 1-20. EJ 347 890.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. 400-86-0020. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.